

Leaf pickup continues –at a cost
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Hamilton politicians opted for more stability rather than rearrange the city's waste collection system schedule again — but it will cost taxpayers an extra \$290,000 next year.

City waste officials recommended eliminating the current practice of adding an unlimited number of bags of leaf and yard waste along with topping off the green cart containers with additional leaf and yard waste.

The proposal, which members of the public works committee soundly rejected, was to have allowed residents to “top off” their green carts with leaf and yard waste, and eliminate the brown bags of leaf and yard waste. The city would have continued to provide bi-weekly leaf and yard waste collection for 14 weeks during the season, saving about \$5,000.

Beth Goodger, director of waste management, said the change is necessary because the city is receiving “too much leaf and yard waste” in green carts. The material, which goes to the city's Central Composting Centre, is eating up the facility's capacity preventing it from processing its organic contracts signed with Halton Region and Simcoe County.

Politicians, including Flamborough councillor Margaret McCarthy, who always wants to save money, were opposed to changing the waste collection system again.

All members of the public works committee complained about the amount of criticism residents have been voicing over the ever-changing collection system.

“You need an engineering degree to take out the garbage,” said Coun. Sam Merulla. “We need buy-in from residents, not alienate them.”

Added Ancaster councillor Lloyd Ferguson: “I don't know how we can sell this.”

Ms. McCarthy echoed her colleagues' comments, saying even though it will cost the city about \$290,000 to cancel the contract with Simcoe County, it will provide some stability for residents.

“I'm the last one to support financial increases,” she said. “I'm not convinced this is the way to go.”

Stoney Creek councillor Maria Pearson, who is also chair of the waste management task force, endorsed staff's recommendation. She said once homeowners understand the new changes, “they will embrace it.”

Ms. Pearson found the committee's decision “ironic” given the city's dire financial outlook. Even though the changes will save \$5,000, councillors were willing to ignore the economic benefits to the city and continue the status quo which will mean a more costly service to operate.

But Ward 5 councillor Chad Collins said it seems the waste management proposals are pitting

Simcoe County against their own residents.

“The complaint I get now is there are so many changes it’s difficult to keep up,” he said.

Politicians will vote on the recommendation at their Nov. 12 council meeting.